

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns in a dark brown color, framing the central text.

First Game

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First Game by peridottie

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Summary:

Mike has his very first football game coming up, and the Losers all support him in their own (weird) way.

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Author's Note:

This was for a prompt I got on my tumblr!! I hope you all enjoy it bc i love Mike so much

“Hey, Mike,” someone whispered. Mike jumped a little, swiveling in his seat and dropping his pen with a soft clack onto the floor. The girl who sat behind him (her name was either Kate or Kathryn) smiled. “When’s the game?”

Mike scratched the back of his neck. “Oh, uh, five o’clock,” he answered quietly, bending down and picking up his pencil.

Kate or Kathryn smiled. “Cool. You’re gonna cream those other guys!” Mike shrugged, smiling sheepishly.

“I hope so.” He turned back around, chewing on the end of his pen and sighing. He felt out of place, wearing his bulky jersey and cleats in class. Everyone who looked at him was reminded of the fact tonight was the first game of the year for the Derry Tigers. Derry high school, like all others, was very passionate about their football team. Fall was the most exciting sports season, and the stands were always packed with people from Derry, even at the away games. Some of the Junior and Senior football players would sneak onto rival schools’ campuses and steal jerseys and equipment to burn. It was serious stuff.

That's why Mike was terrified. He'd been training all summer, and his coach had said he was like an angel on his feet. It actually pissed some of the other guys off, how good Mike was, and Mike hadn't ever played football before then. Coach said that if Mike was on the freshman team last year, they would have done a hell of a lot better. But still, no amount of reassurance or praise from Coach could shake Mike's nerves. He was going to be down there in the field, huge, beaming lights shining down on him. Thousands upon thousands of eyes, all on him. The fact he was the only black player on the team (or in the school) didn't help, either.

The rest of the class went by like it was a dream, and when Mike stepped out with his bag slung over both shoulders, he felt someone grab it. For the second time that day, Mike was gripped with panic. His hands clenched and he was yanked back by whoever was holding his backpack.

“Hey, hey, hey!” Richie said, laughing. Thank God it was just Richie. “What’s up, Mikey-boy? You look like a zombie! Your brains are oozing outa your ears!!” Mike glared and shouldered Richie. Hard.

“Asshole. Listen, Rich, I don’t have time to goof off. Tonight--”

“--is the ‘Big Game’. Yeah, boss, I know. You’ve been blowing us off this whole frockin week!”

Mike shrugged, a little apologetically. He did feel bad that he hadn’t been able to be with the Losers so much lately. Football was demanding, and he still had to keep up with his chores at the farm, but his father *had* given him a little slack for that. Still, football season was in fall, which was also harvesting season. But even Mike’s mother said he should focus on football. She was awfully proud of her son.

“Sorry, Rich.”

“Hey! No worries, my good man,” Richie replied. “We’re aalll coming to see you tonight, whether you totally suck the root or not!”

Mike rolled his eyes in his classic Mike Fashion, which was similar to Stan’s, but less exasperated and more genuine. He tugged absentmindedly on the straps of his backpack, perhaps hiding his genuine fear and anxiety over how well he’d do. “Oh, gee. Thanks.”

“Aw, come on, Mikeeyyy.” Richie grabbed Mike’s chin and cooed at him, and Mike jerked away. “You know I’m joking! You’re gonna go to the *super bowl*, Mikey! You watch! First JV, then *nationals*!”

Mike smiled and a bit of a blush crept up his face at Richie’s (incredibly cheesy) compliment. “In your dreams, Rich. You’re just hoping I’ll set you up with some guys on the team.”

“Aw, come on! Just a little peek inside the locker room, Mikey??”

Mike was already walking away, throwing a dismissive glance over his shoulder while Richie kept squawking out at him. "Mikey, don't be a square!! I'll do whatever ya want, Mike, promise!! I'll never say a yo mama joke ever again! I'll tell everyone you copped a feel on Jess Conerey! Mikey!"

At lunch, Mike was dragged by his teammates into the quad. "Hanlon, c'mon, it's your first game," an acne-ridden boy called Jackson Peele said. "No way you're gonna get to play so early on. So just chill out."

"Fuck you, Peele," the linebacker who happened to be Richie's infatuation said. "Mike's better than your fat ass, Coach drools over him, no way is he gonna get the fucken bench."

"I'm not fat!"

"Will you guys shut up for a second?" Mike snapped. He bounced his leg and wrung his hands nervously. He couldn't tell what was worse, playing terribly his first game or spending the whole time on the bench. His shirt underneath his jersey felt sticky with sweat and uncomfortable. He was so

(you're an outsider)

out of place.

"Mike? Mike! There you are!" Like an angel, Beverly Marsh was seen in a gap between the bulky husks of the football players. She made a B-line for Mike, smiling, her long legs getting her there quickly while Bill meandered behind her.

Beverly walked through the football players like she didn't notice them and took Mike's hand, bouncing from foot to foot in a surprising amount of excitement unlike Beverly. "I was wondering where you were!! Oh, God, look how handsome you are in that jersey!" Mike smiled shyly and looked at his stunned teammates and looked back into Beverly's shining face.

"Th...Thanks, Bev," Mike murmured. "I, uh, think I look stupid in it, to be honest."

Beverly snorted. “Stupid my ass. You look like a regular dreamboat, Mike Hanlon, and I’ll keep saying so until you admit I’m right.” Bill finally came up behind Beverly and grinned, looking mildly at the other team members.

“She’s r-ri-right,” he agreed, stuffing his hands in his pockets. “We can’t wait f-for the g-g-guh-geh—*jeu*—game tonight. We’re all p-p-planning to—”

Beverly hissed and slapped Bill on the arm. “Don’t spoil it!” she cried before turning back to Mike, smiling and winking in a way that made Mike’s heart flutter. You just couldn’t help it, Bev was something else. “See you then, kid.” She only tilted her head up slightly to kiss Mike on the cheek before retreating next to Bill. Bill clapped Mike on the shoulder, smiling only a little, but his eyes expressed all the genuine love and pride that could probably sustain Mike for a lifetime. “Go k-kih-ick some a-ass, Mike.”

Mike sighed deeply and watched the two redheads walk away, into the blur of high school students, always somewhere to be. Somewhere to belong.

Mike turned around and looked at his teammates, and that dashing smile he was known for spread across his face as he snorted with laughter. “What’s the big deal, pansies?” he joked, and that cracked all of them up, dissolving that awkward aura after Beverly’s affectionate display.

After school, Mike came out of class with his heart pounding. It was a lot to do with excitement (the football team had a way of hyping Mike up, and maybe the adrenaline from being kissed by Beverly helped, too), and a lot to do with anxiety. He didn’t know whether to laugh or vomit.

He walked past the library with his head down, watching his own footsteps, when he heard the door to the library open.

“Hey, Stan, where’s the—aw *shit*!”

Mike whipped around at the sound of Eddie’s shrill voice, a stream of students continuing to billow past him. Eddie was staring at Mike in

horror. He stumbled backwards, tripped over his own feet, and fell with a dull thud onto the concrete. Stan clapped a hand over his mouth in laughter, and Ben groaned before leaning down to pick Eddie up.

Then Mike noticed that supplies had gone tumbling out of Eddie's arms and spilled around him. Tape, glitter, glue, stencils, markers, the works. A ruler clattered as Stan reached his arm out to Eddie.

"Son of a bitch, Ben!" Eddie howled.

"Jesus, Eddie, shut up," Ben replied. "If you didn't go and freak out, you wouldn't have fell!"

Mike cut through the students and made his way over to the three boys. "Hey, guys, what's up?" Eddie was still rubbing the seat of his shorts, with Ben for support, but Stan's eyes widened when he saw Mike approach. He crouched and gathered the supplies in his arms, kicking what appeared to be a sign behind him and letting it skid across the sidewalk.

"Nothing," he said. "I mean—you'll see at the game. Eddie, you spastic, it was just Mike!"

"You think I don't know that?!" Eddie brayed, furrowing his eyebrows. He puffed out his red cheeks and took a deep breath when he looked up at Mike. "That's why I freaked, it was supposed to be a surprise, Stanley! Did you see anything, Mike?" Mike shook his head, and Eddie sighed with relief. "Oh, good!"

Ben shook his head exasperatedly. He grabbed the sign behind Stan and looked at it, making sure Mike couldn't see, and was relieved it wasn't damaged. He smiled.

"We just made something for you. You know, for the game. Maybe you can keep it and remember the first time you played, and that we were all there together. I still need to find Richie and Bill and Bev to help."

Mike's heart swelled. A lump, a small one but one nonetheless, formed in his throat. "Man, you didn't have to do that. All of you

being there would be enough.”

“No, it wouldn't,” Stan said in his matter-of-fact tone. “You need to stop taking the shortest end of the stick, Mike. We had to make this special.”

“Y-Yeah,” Eddie agreed, shifting his eyes a little. “We, um—it was my idea, but Ben and Stan did most of it.” Mike grinned.

“Hey, Eddie,” he said, and opened his arms as well as crouching low. “You wanna see how you get tackled in football?”

Eddie looked around with wide eyes and started shaking his head wildly, stammering and backing up. “Mike, no, don't you dare! Don't you—” he screamed when Mike charged him, but Mike simply grabbed Eddie by the waist and picked him up. Eddie yelled, kicking his legs. “You put me down!! I'm gonna fall, Mike! I—don't do that, that tickles!!” He squalled some more until Mike set him down, all of them laughing except Eddie.

“See you Losers at the game!” Mike called, and he winked at the three boys. He started walking away, towards the direction of the football field. Mike had started the day with anxiety so bad he wanted to melt, but by now, his hubris matched that of a greek god. Sure, he might get nervous again later, before the game, but for now, he was nothing short of ecstatic. All of the Losers, his best friends in the entire world, were coming to support him. Even after skipping out on so many plans, ignoring their calls until days later, and becoming a jock, the very enemy, they still supported him. They loved him. And he loved them, he supposed, more than he'd ever love anyone else. He spent the whole walk to the locker room daydreaming. Richie standing and screaming into the field, Beverly cheering with him, Bill's proud face, Eddie and Ben and Stan waving the sign and clapping for him.

It was going to be a good game.